

The Ballarat Naturalist

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October 4th 2024. Guest Speaker Report Parks Victoria - Update on some activities In the Ballarat Region

It was a pleasure to welcome as guest speaker **Siobhan Rogan** who is well known to many members through her leadership as Area Chief Ranger for Parks Victoria based in Creswick Office since 2015, and her dedication and support for community involvement in conservation issues.

In her talk Siobhan focused on just two activities, from among the vast range of issues covered by Parks Victoria in this area.

- Development and management of Woowookarung Regional Park - the first 8 years
- Dealing with impacts of major fires around Buangor State Park in February 2024

Woowookarung Regional Park is unique in many ways. It is an area of 640 ha within the City in Ballarat, established as a Regional Park after a campaign by community groups (including FNCB) to ensure that valuable native forest and plantations were not opened up to real estate development. It became Canadian forest in 2016 and then Woowookarung Regional Park in 2018. The complexity of managing the park in the first 8 years is outlined in the table below under 4 main focus areas:

HOUSEKEEPING

Park Planning - naming places tracks, features	Manage access (gates) or private by neighbours
Establishing utility licences: CHW, other	Woowookarung public Website development
Sorting road responsibilities - council, other	Woowookarung Park regulations
Managing community and group -activities	Develop compliance trained staff

SAFETY

Waste and asbestos manage- ment	Mine capping
Safety signage	Wayfinding and signage
Road and track repair	Removing unsafe access
Removing hazardous trees	Ranger presence

VISITORS

Mt Clear Mtn Bike Trailhead and Plan	Dementia friendly forest / sensory trail
Trails - Fern and Cherry-Ballart Loops	Grass-tree nature trail
Establishment of car parks	The Lookout
Repair of selected tracks and trails	Update Official park map (Many versions)

ENVIRONMENT

Major weed control 165K + 196K external	PC Dieback mapping and testing
Erosion control	Sustainable creek crossings
Trail rehabilitation - with Wadawurung	PC Dieback Hygiene
Enviro interpretations and support research	Revegetation - almost 10,000 stems

The park is fortunate in having it's own Ranger and some special funding, yet financial limitations are slowing installation of several features in the Park plan - like visitor facilities, improved access and integration of the Goldfields Trail to link the park with other areas of bush and to Ballarat.

I find it striking how much of the work in Park management is out of sight of the public and community groups. Examples are Rezoning of land from Legacy zones - e.g. from "Farm" and "Rural Living Zones" to " Public Conservation and Resource Zone". Studies of Land Capability and Full Site Feature Survey (LiDar), Cultural Heritage survey and Native Vegetation Assessment are also

conducted out of public view..

Below -Map of Woowookarung showing re-zoning of the Regional Park (yellow boundary).



The Bayindeen Rocky Road Fire affecting Buangor State Forest is an example of an unplanned event that places huge loads on the staff and resources of land management agencies. This fire started on Thursday 22 February 2024 within Mount Buangor State Park. A week later the fire was contained, after sweeping through the park, Mount Cole State Forest, and private land. The Fire Perimeter was 160 km and 21,684 ha was burned. About 98 % Buangor State Forest was severely burned, including all tracks, trails, roads, campsites, and signage. All biodiversity was affected, and a rain event on 1 April compounded damage through erosion.

A first step in management of this major fire was a "Rapid Response Assessment" in March 2024 on the fire impacts, undertaken by specialists across all public land affected. This covered estimates of assets (Roads; Indigenous and European values; Waterways; Biodiversity; Tourism and Economic Impacts) as well as a report on Frames, Actions and Priorities for dealing with these.

Collaboration across agencies is a vital aspect of dealing with fire. Parks Victoria and DEECA have joined forces in the response where practicable, in a "tenure blind approach". The management of this fire is complicated by the recent Victorian Government's designation of part of Mount Cole State Forest to form part of the **new Mount Buangor National Park**.

[<https://vnpa.org.au/campaigns/central-west/>]

The park is now closed under National Park Regulations to support biodiversity and protect cultural and European assets. Gates are now on park entrances. Following the recent Asset Assessment of park by the local team, the "insurance loss adjustor" will assess impacts in the coming weeks. A deer control program occurred in August 2024 and neighboring pest animal programs will occur later this year.

The brief summary of actions and work by agency staff outlined above represents only the start of the work in managing impacts of a large fire. There is huge impact on the staff capacity to deal with other more standard and predictable work of Parks Victoria and a drain on resources.

We thanked Siobhan for her interesting talk and for enlightening us of the complex processes and skills involved in the management of a new Regional Park such as Woowookarung, and also in the process and resources needed in management of a large wildfire in the same Region.

John Petheram



A fire affected area near
Mt Cole

.Significant species search in Enfield State Forest and Park

Our October field trip, led by Emily Noble, scoped three sites west of Enfield. The sites were within the 545 Ha area planned for a fuel reduction burn.

We parked at our first site on Incolls Rd and walked eastwards along a track towards a dam. The heathy dry forest was carpeted with a striking vista of Golden Bush Pea *Pultenaea gunnii*, just past its best flowering but still impressive. The trees were predominantly Red Stringybark and Scentbark. Occasional Small Grass-Tree *Xanthorrhoea minor* were observed amongst grass tussocks.

Observations of orchids, other flowers, birds, animals and a fungus soon filled three pages of my notebook! Roger commented that the stands of Spiny-headed Mat-Rush *Lomandra longifolia* were the highlight of this site. Les showed us a fungus with pink-tinged gills (possibly *Pluteus*) growing on a log.

Several of us spotted the bright yellow Canary Worm *Fletcheria sugdeni*, which usually prefer wetter conditions than the dry track they were crossing.



Vireya found a couple of *Gonipterus* Eucalyptus Weevils on a sapling.

A group of empty (possibly *Anthelid*) cocoons were seen on the trunk of a stringybark.

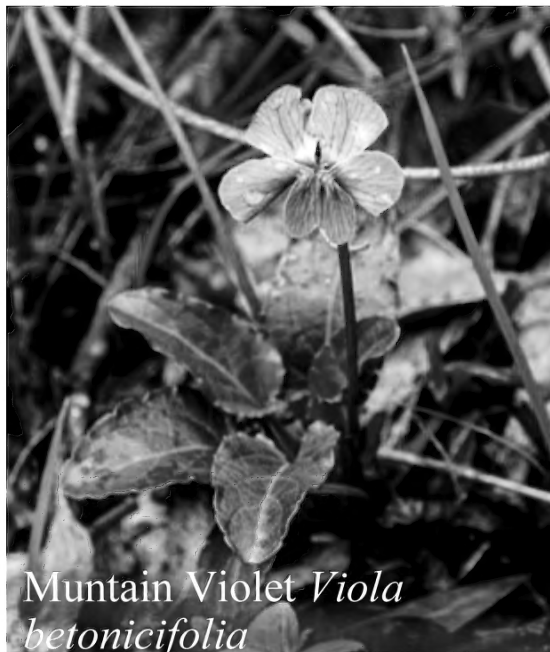


A Caper White Butterfly *Belenois java* was also spotted next to the track.



Birds seen or heard included Fantail Cuckoo, several White-Throated Tree Creepers, a single Chough, Kookaburra and Pied Currawong.

We delighted in the sighting of many orchids- Waxlip, Common Bird -Orchid, Tall and Nodding Greenhood, Mayfly and Leopard Orchid, plus many Sun Orchid buds and Tiny Greenhood rosettes. Other notable flower observations were Ivy Leaved Violet *Viola hederacea* and Native Violet *Viola betonicifolia*, Common Heath,



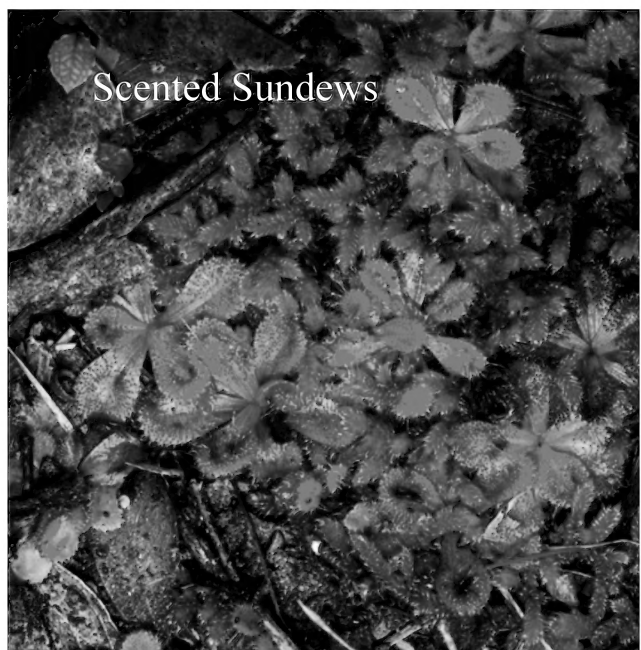
Mountain Violet *Viola betonicifolia*



Twining Fringe-lily



Leopard Orchid



Scented Sundews

Love Creeper, Early Nancy, Common Apple-Berry, Trailing Goodenia, Running Postman, Snake Wattle, Slender Rice Flower, Twining Fringe-Lily and *Hardenbergia*.

Down near the dam, kangaroo footprints were seen and Common Eastern Froglets were heard. After all these observations we deserved a hearty morning tea at the Stevens Tennis Reserve back on the main road, where Les found a yellow fungus with white gills, *Amanita austropulchella*.

We next headed to Halls Road and parked just before it crosses Misery Creek. This valley dry forest was grassed with Wallaby Grasses and Poa tussocks. Narrow leaf Peppermints, Red Stringybarks and Candlebarks predominated the canopy. Narrow-leaf Bitter-Pea *Daviesia leptophylla* and Prickly Moses *Acacia verticillata* were the predominant flowering shrubs. Within 10 m of the parked cars we found an Enfield Grevillea *Grevillea bedgoodiana* in bud. At this site we observed four Sundew types-Tall, Scented, Grassland and Pale. Emily pointed out Pagoda Lichen and Broody Swan-neck Moss. Vireya photographed a number of insects and a *Tubifera tomentosa*, a striking orange-coloured member of the Reticulate Slime Mold Family. Carol found a bracket fungus *Stereum illudens* and we were also shown the honeycomb-like structures of *Hexagonia vesparia* fungus. In addition to the orchids seen at Incolls Rd, here we saw Golden Moth Orchids and Pink Lady Fingers *Caladenia carnea*.

Roger spotted a colony of bird orchids with much smaller than normal leaves and flowers. There was discussion of whether this was a hybrid of the Common Bird-Orchid *Chiloglottis valida* with the Dainty Wasp Orchid *Chiloglottis trapeziformis*, named *Chiloglottis x pescottiana*.



Emily spotted a red wasp hovering around this contentious orchid. Nearby were large colonies of greenhood orchid rosettes. A gully hosted Hop Bush, delicate Maidenhair Ferns and Common Apple-Berry. Other flowers observed were Common Beard-Heath, Coarse Dodder - Laurel, *Hardenbergia* and Riceflowers. Birds seen or heard at this site were Yellow-faced or White-eared Honeyeater, Striated Pardalote, Crimson Rosella, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Grey Shrikethrush.

We were reinvigorated by lunch at Surface Point Picnic Area before driving to our third site at the corner of Misery Creek Rd and

Orchid Track. We walked through the bush in an easterly direction-grassy dry forest with predominantly Brown Stringbarks and Broad-leaved Peppermints. Tussocks of Red-anther Wallaby Grass and poas lined the forest floor with many flowering and other plants. Native Violet *Viola betonicifolia* was prolific at this site, with Ivy Leaved Violet *Viola hederacea* also present. Common Flat-Pea, Creamy Candles, Australian Indigo, Early Nancy, Murnong *Murnong walteri*, Bottle-Daisy and *Hardenbergia* were all flowering. Orchids observed were: Waxlips, Several Leopard Orchids, Nodding Greenhoods just finished flowering, Sun Orchid buds, Onion Orchid leaves, many *Caladenia* leaves, a Parson's Bands leaf and a nearly flowering Hare Orchid bud amongst a colony of leaves were observed. This was only the second colony of Hare Orchids seen by Emily in the Enfield Forest. Roger gave several of us our first smell of Stinkweed. Carol photographed a beautifully twined group of Twining Fringe-Lily. Emily pointed out Small Poranthera, *Poranthera microphylla* and Spoon Leaved Cud Weed *Stuartina muelleri* as well as a real highlight, platelets (circular ground scratchings) of the uncommon ground-nesting Painted Buttonquail.



On our way home, driving back along Misery Creek Rd, there was a striking show of flowering *Grevillea bedggoodiana* (above) growing on a clay road cutting bank. This rounded off a very productive day of observations. On iNaturalist 5 observers uploaded 132 observations of 74 species from the day.

Report by Angela Aldred, Images Carol H, Angela A and Vireya J

DISCOVERING BALLARAT'S BUSHLAND

A guide to 37 natural
places in the Ballarat region

Second Edition



Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat

The second edition of the book *Discovering Ballarat's Bushland* is now available to purchase.

\$10 FNCB members

\$12 Members of affiliated clubs, wholesale price

\$15 General Public, Retail Price

Copies available at all Club meetings or contact Treasurer, Kathy Elder.

So far copies are available for sale to the general public at Collins Books in Bridge Mall and Lydiard Street.

Kathy and other Club members are talking to Visitor

Information Centres to see if they will also stock copies for sale.

If you know of any outlet opportunity, please pass the details on to Kathy.

If you would like to have a supply on hand to sell to people or groups you are associated with, please see Kathy to arrange this.



Our display at the Senior's Expo Mercure Convention room

Shelter Built of What?

In last month's newsletter, the field trip report described a caterpillar found at Clarksdale. The *Peritropha oligodrachma* caterpillar lives on eucalypt leaves. By day it hides in a shelter it makes on the surface of a leaf, then at night it emerges to devour the leaf. But what does it build that shelter from? The newsletter article said "grass", but in fact the caterpillar produces its own building materials.



The photo shows the larva just visible in a lace-like tunnel composed of "frass" bound together with silk. Over time it fills in the gaps and the shelter changes colour to look more like sawdust.

And just what is frass? Frass is a term used by entomologists for insect excrement. That's right, the caterpillar uses its own waste products to build its home!

Vireya J

**Excerpts from the Club Meeting held 7.30pm, October 4th, 2024
Held in person and via Zoom**

Opening and Apologies

: Acting Chair Andy Arnold welcomed 19 members and one visitor attending in person, and six members attending via Zoom.

Apologies: Elva Bird, Max Thompson, Sheree Cartledge, Neville Oddie, Margaret Rich and Mark Moravec.

Guest Speaker: Siobhan Rogan from Parks Victoria presented a talk on "Parks Victoria activities and priorities in the region", particularly featuring works over the last eight years at Woowookarung Regional Park since it was officially gazetted as a Regional Park and the impacts of this year's Bayindeen-Rocky Road wildfire on Mt Buangor State Park in particular.

Business Arising from Previous Club Meeting on September 6, 2024

- FNCB members voted to pledge a donation of \$500 to Trust for Nature's Clarkesdale Appeal on the proviso that the target was reached to secure the \$220,000 contribution from the State Government's BushBank project. The target of \$110,000 was reached, so consequently the FNCB donation has been made.

- The final version of Discovering Ballarat's Bushland was proof-read and approved by Carol, Roger, Peter and Claire, with warm thanks expressed by members. It has now been published and is available for purchase as of tonight, once we set a price for members, affiliates and commercial sales. Whilst we haven't yet received the final invoice, each copy is likely to have cost the Club less than \$6 to have printed.

Motion: That the FNCB sell copies of the second edition of Discovering Ballarat's Bushland for \$10 to members, \$12 to FNCB affiliates and \$15 for the general public/ commercial sales.

Moved: K. Elder

Seconded: C. Hall

Carried.

Business Arising from Correspondence:

- Discussed family membership application from Julian Veerasingam and Thakshayini Balachandra. Emily noted that Thakshi is currently undertaking the Nature Stewards Program in Ballarat.

Motion: That their membership application be accepted pending payment of the FNCB Membership Fee. Carried

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- Whilst a Club representative was invited to attend the Environment Victoria AGM in Melb. on Wednesday 23rd October from 5.30pm, no-one volunteered to attend.

- Discussed request for support of Ballarat International Foto Biennale's "Rakali Ruckus".

Motion: That Emily provide BIFB with an appropriate letter of support for this project on behalf of the FNCB by Tues. 8th Oct.

Moved: E. Noble **Seconded:** F. Hanrahan **Carried by a majority.**

Reports:

Treasurer's Report

Opening bal. as at Sep. 6, 2024: \$10,657.77

Income \$99.90

Expenses: \$844.25

Closing bal.: \$9,913.42

Great Southern BioBlitz update: This was the fifth year that the Club has participated in this event and we recorded our second highest number of species, with three more days for people to log into iNaturalist and help identify/ corroborate identifications. So far, there have been 1515 observations recording 515 species, 54 observers and 173 different identifiers. About half of our observations are plants, with the rest largely divided between birds and insects, although a few other fauna and fungi are also included.

Ballarat Senior's Expo report: five club members manned the FNCCB promotional tables from 10am-2pm, introducing the Club and its activities to quite a few Expo attendees. *We were unable to locate the small promotional flyers printed-up last year to hand out to people. Please check your paperwork files if you think you might have them tucked-away somewhere.*

General Business

Sunday 6th October field trip, 9.30am – 4pm: “Significant species search in Enfield State Park” to be led by Emily Noble.

Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture (Friday 1st November) planning: *please arrive at 6.30pm to help set up the room for our biggest event of the year and meet and greet visitors. Please bring flowers in vases to decorate the room and a plate of supper to share if you can.* Emily is working on the promotional flyer with Pete but is still waiting on key information and photos from the guest speaker. Kathy will set-up a book sales table.

Planning for 17th– 19th October 2025 SEANA Camp to be hosted by our Club: please get out and scope possible sites this month if you can to give us an idea of their highlights at this time of year. If you'd like other members to join you, contact Emily who can put you in touch with each other. Some of the locations that it would be great to scout are: Mt Beckworth, Lal Lal State Forest, Woowookarung RP, WREN reserves, Enfield State Park, Creswick Regional Park, anywhere else you think might be suitable for twenty or so visitors next October. Shirley offered to liaise with BirdLife Ballarat members who may be interested in leading a SEANA Camp field trip. .Members attending the SEANA Spring Camp 2024 at Marysville will take along some copies of Discovering Ballarat's Bushland to sell.

The Friends of Mullawallah Wetlands are hosting the 25th Anniversary celebration of the Cardigan-Windermere Landcare Group at the wetlands 19th Oct

Show & Tell/ Field Reports

- Val noted that there were many Golden Moth-orchids *Diuris chryseopsis* now flowering at Sparrow Ground, and Salmon Sun-orchids *Thelymitra rubra* are budding in the same reserve.
- John G reported that he saw the *Grevillea rosmarinifolia* in his garden covered in 12-15 male and female Caper White Butterflies.
- Emily described the delight of her first ever encounter with a pair of distinctively pink-beaked Painted Honeyeaters *Grantiella picta* calling and feeding on the fruit of a mistletoe growing on an Ironbark she recently learned was planted by Roger Thomas at Clarkesdale in March 1983.

Our Next Club Meeting and Stella Bedgood Memorial Lecture Friday Nov 1st at 7.30 pm

Guest Speaker Jane Rusden sharing her Nature Journaling

Followed by Supper . There will be no business meeting.

**We don't yet have a volunteer to write-up this presentation.
Please contact Emily.**

Sunday 3rd November field trip- 2pm – 8pm: “Regeneration of Ross Creek State Forest post-wildfire and moths at Stringybark” to be led by Kathy Elder and Emily Noble.

Meet at Kathy Elder's property “Stringybark”, 61 Skippers Rd, Scarsdale at 2pm. We will head out to a couple of locations within Ross Creek State Forest affected by February's wildfire and have afternoon tea in the forest before returning to Stringybark for a BYO dinner at 6pm.

We'll set up a moth sheet or two and see what arrives by 8pm. Bring the device you use for iNaturalist if portable and wear weather-appropriate clothes (dark colours recommended due to the ash) and clean, sturdy shoes. Bring water, small mirror, camera, magnifying lens, binoculars, field guides, afternoon tea, dinner, thermos and campchair. Insect repellent

A volunteer is still needed to write up this field trip

Meetings and Excursions

Fri Nov 1st Stella Bedgood Memorial Lecture

Speaker Jane Rusden– *Nature journalling*

Sun Nov 3rd Lilwarre/ Stringybark, Scarsdale Bush fire
regeneration, wildflowers, moths– Afternoon and evening event

Future events

Fri Dec 6th Speaker Susan Kruss *More inspiring stories from the
FNCB's illustrious past.*

Sun Dec 8th afternoon Christmas break-up at Clarkesdale Bird
Sanctuary

Volunteers needed to write up these events for our newsletter.

Next Committee meeting Nov 26th at 7.30 pm by Zoom

**Club meetings are normally held on 1st Friday of the month at
7.30 pm at the Federation Uni Gillies St Campus (corner of
Gillies and Gregory Sts, Lake Wendouree),
Committee**

Website: <http://fieldnatballarat.wordpress.com>

Club email: ballaratfnc@gmail.com

Meetings - in person and may continue to be held via Zoom.
Members will be kept informed of arrangements each month.

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